

PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER,
SIR ROBERT MENZIES, IN LONDON, ON 27TH JUNE, 1965.

PRIME MINISTER : There is a passage in the communique about the voluntary contributions to the United Nations to get it out of its present financial troubles, Great Britain and Canada having made announcements. I reserved the decision of Australia and perhaps that requires a little explanation.

What I said was there were two aspects to the matter. One was that we all wanted to see the United Nations solvent but that the nations who hadn't paid and about whom the Article 19 argument was being waged, must consider whether their position was being weakened or strengthened by these voluntary contributions. In other words, if the people who hadn't paid come to the conclusion they can go on refusing to pay because the other people will make up the difference by voluntary contributions, it may be that the Article 19 point will never be determined and I think it should be determined and determined quite soon.

I indicated that we had a good record of voluntary contributions but I did want to discuss that with my colleagues as to which way the balance might lie. You might have noticed that the United States had not announced any voluntary contributions yet and I don't know whether they will at all. They may have similar considerations in their mind. This question requires a little thought from the point of view of are we handicapping ourselves in the Article 19 argument.

There was some discussion about whether the Prime Minister of Great Britain should be Chairman of the Mission. The overwhelming view of the conference was that he was doing it as Chairman of the conference not as Prime Minister of Great Britain.

There was a great deal of argument - if one might call it such - about Great Britain being committed against the North Vietnamese.

Some members of the Conference appeared to think that they were not committed one way or the other. The fact is that most of them were. They think Australia is committed - as indeed Australia is - because Australia has produced troops. Australia was committed before then quite clearly as a matter of publicly-stated policy.

Countries like Tanzania and so on are equally committed not by troops but by the plainest public declarations in favour of China and against America.

I think there is a good deal of double talk about committed people and uncommitted people on this matter. In fact I think on two or three occasions I said so.

The end result on Malaysia I thought was not unsatisfactory.

The shadow of the Afro-Asian conference at Algiers has been rather heavily cast upon this conference. It may seem odd because it has nothing to do with the Commonwealth. It is an entirely different body which has some membership in common. Still it was very much in evidence and I thought at one stage there was a disposition to go a little cautiously on the subject of Malaysia and the Indonesian

confrontation and this might muddy the waters at Algiers and therefore the end result was very satisfactory from our point of view because they once more quoted what we said last year and added words bringing it up to date, so I think the Malaysian matter came out pretty well.

There are a few comments I would make on disarmament. You know or can guess how these communiqués are hammered out over a long day, but you get to a conclusion which isn't exactly in the form you would have liked yourself but in substance is near enough to be acceptable. This disarmament question includes one or two illustrations of that -

"They hoped that early progress would be made towards an acceptable agreement on some of these measures including the limitation and reduction of stocks of nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles."

Now this standing by itself, a reduction of stocks of nuclear weapons unaccompanied by reductions in conventional arms and armaments seems to me to be inadequate, and so I made the point and the words were added - "and a phased reduction in conventional armaments" which brought it back into balance. Everybody agreed that that was right but it had perhaps been overlooked in the draft.

This reference to nuclear-free zones arises because the organisation of African unity and the Latin American States have been working out the idea of a nuclear-free zone in their own countries. I explained the reason why my Government rejected the idea of a nuclear-free zone South of the Equator.

Somebody credited me with talking about nuclear visitors, which was a new phrase to me and I not having uttered it, don't know what it is, but I can repeat the point that I made with the greatest of pleasure, because I have made it elsewhere. I said that if we were to enter into agreement for a nuclear-free zone south of the equator and were in a position to enforce such agreements as we had made, the only effect would be that our opponents being situated north of the equator could fire nuclear weapons at us or at our friends without retaliation because we would have banned our friends from discharging nuclear weapons from south of the equator. That would be a ridiculous position - it would help our enemies and hurt our friends.

We are not starting a nuclear war and Australia is not a nuclear power and has no intention of becoming one, We agree that there should not be a proliferation of nuclear weapons. We think they ought to be kept in as few hands as possible, responsible hands, and we would fear very much the escalation of small wars if a number of powers themselves possessed nuclear weapons. This has been stated by me many times in the Commonwealth Parliament. If some other people in entirely different circumstances want to set up a nuclear-free zone, that is their business. That is the background to the disarmament passage.

Now let's turn to Rhodesia which occupied an enormous amount of time this year as it did last.

From the very beginning of this meeting, the British Government made it clear through Mr. Bottomley that they wanted a state of affairs in which there would be steady progress towards majority rule unimpeded by reactionary constitutional changes, immediate improvement in the political status of the African population and the progressive elimination of racial discrimination.

They also made it quite clear that they wouldn't recommend to Parliament - Parliament being the one authority on this matter - the grant of independence to Rhodesia unless they were satisfied it was on a basis acceptable to the people of the country taken as a whole. In other words, to the majority of the people on a conception of adult suffrage. Now this seemed to me to be clear enough.

Over what period the change to complete majority rule should occur, that is of course a different matter. Nobody but the extremists could imagine that it could be created tomorrow morning and perhaps none but an extremist on the other side would believe that it could never be created. This is the problem of Southern Rhodesia, the two extreme views - no change - complete change tomorrow morning. I think there is a growing support for the idea that this has to be phased in some careful way so that over a period of time the movement is steadily towards increasing the African vote until you get a majority and they will be in charge of Parliament. This, I imagine, is the view of the British Government and it was the view of several of us who spoke on this matter.

Now the communique itself as in the case of last year's set out first of all what the British Minister said and then what some other Prime Ministers said. The British Prime Minister was urged by other - not the other Prime Ministers you will observe - but other Prime Ministers, because I was not one of them nor were indeed two or three others.... was urged to convene a constitutional conference at an early date, say within three months and there were certain other, in effect, directions contained in that paragraph. These were the views expressed to the British Government, not by the conference, but by certain Prime Ministers with strong views on these matters, principally African Prime Ministers.

My approach to the matter was and is that I think that the British Government having the complete responsibility on this matter is having to deal not with a Crown colony but with a self-governing colony which has been self-governing for many years, that the British Government should not be handicapped by too much public instruction, that it was rather a mistake to be talking about a conference within three months. It was quite unrealistic, particularly as obviously there must first of all be some negotiations continued between Great Britain and Southern Rhodesia and as Mr. Wilson pointed out in the last paragraph of the communique on this point, if there is undue tardiness, if there is no willingness to engage in these discussions, then the British Government would consider whether it should call a constitutional conference between all the relevant parties.

Now it is quite clear that the United Kingdom understands the difficulty of this matter. This is not a problem which lends itself to shouting from the sidelines. It is a very serious and difficult problem, and so far as I am concerned, I would like to see an attitude of mind on both sides in which discussions continued in a constructive way between the Governments of Britain and Southern Rhodesia, leading in due course whenever that may be, to the holding of a conference in which all aspects of the matter can be thrashed out from a constitutional point of view.

All this cannot be done in three months, but I think this is rather a bravura touch put in to exhibit their sense of the urgency of the matter. A little quietness and a little deliberation would be of great value on this matter.

I must say I thought Mr. Wilson and his Government went as far as any Government could go on this matter.

Later on there is a reference to immigration to Britain. I would like to point out that this was not discussed by the conference as a conference. I take the strongest possible view that every country's immigration policy is its own business and this is not open to debate at a Prime Ministers' Conference. It happened that bilaterally the Prime Minister of Great Britain had talks with some of the countries affected by the immigration laws and that is why the matter was referred to. One or two of them mentioned it in the conference itself, but there was no doubt whatever, no lack of unanimity about the proposition that the extent of immigration into Britain was entirely a matter for the British Government.

I want to emphasise that there was no immigration policy, for example, of Australia's mentioned. It is, in this case, entirely a matter for the British Government, and obviously our own is entirely a matter for us. Now this is a very vital principle.

There's a little disposition in the new Commonwealth - I'm using words with extreme moderation - to want to discuss and deal with domestic problems in other countries and this, of course, if pursued will become fatal to the Commonwealth. An association of free, independent, autonomous nations are not going to have their internal business tossed around in conference and the immigration policy is, of course, a perfect example. Every country there at the table has its own policy and I think would agree must jealously guard its own rights to determine the composition of its own population.

The reference that was made to the meeting of Commonwealth trade ministers is preceded by a reference to an officials' meeting. I myself pointed out that there was no value in convening a meeting of Commonwealth trade ministers just out of the blue, to sit down to discuss an almost infinite variety of trading problems, some of which concern one country, some two, some three, but very few of which concern the lot, and if such a meeting occurred, they would be bound to say we must refer these matters to officials. Therefore, commonsense suggested that the officials should meet first and do a bit of work on this matter before the ministers themselves met. Well that view was accepted and was included in the communique.

The Commonwealth Foundation speaks for itself; that was accepted all round without any difficulty.

The Commonwealth Assembly didn't leave the barrier. Well perhaps I'm wrong. The starter started it, but it didn't go for a furlong for the fairly obvious reasons that we have the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Inter-Parliamentary Union and this seems to all of us here to be merely duplication.

The Commonwealth Secretariat. There had been a difference of opinion about what the functions of the Secretariat ought to be. Some of my colleagues obviously felt it ought have a very wide commission and be able to conduct investigations and make economic recommendations, exercise some supervisory power over works of development. There were others of us who said that that would be fatal, that it would require an enormous secretariat for a start and would give rise to a good deal of resentment around the Commonwealth on the part of people who thought they were quite capable of conducting their own developmental ideas. In the long run, the

limited proposition was approved. The Secretariat is to be what I will call a facilitating body, not to be an executive body. It is not to seek to extend its jurisdiction in a hurry and must proceed cautiously in a pragmatic way, and that being accepted as it was, I think the Secretariat might serve a very useful purpose.

As you already know, Arnold Smith was appointed. In fact, I gather that during the discussions he had an overwhelming volume of support and in the conference where his nomination was approved unanimously. I'm supposed to have had strong views about various people. I don't know why. I read in one paper, that used to be a pretty accurate paper, to the effect that I have been carrying since Suez a sort of vendetta with a gentleman called George Ivan Smith. I had never heard of him at the time of Suez; in fact I wasn't conscious of his existence until his name appeared on the list of nominees. Sir John Bunting reminded me that he was once at a dinner which I attended. That's the nearest I have ever got to him. I have no views - good, bad or indifferent - about him.

It has to be remembered that there is great advantage in a venture of this kind in having a man who has what I will call civil service experience, who is accustomed to the processes of government and how they are worked out, who knows how the political animal operates as all senior civil servants do, and of course in this field this man was outstanding.

Peiris of Ceylon, whom we didn't nominate, but whose name we said ought to be under consideration because people have a very high opinion of him, turned out to be not available because he has been appointed the Ambassador of Ceylon to West Germany.

There is no reason why if the Secretariat carries out its designed functions and doesn't extend them, there is no reason why the whole experiment should not be extremely useful.

I'm told that one or two points ought to be made on the guide lines of the Commonwealth mission.

It must be remembered that this mission has been appointed by the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference and is responsible to it as a conference. Men are not appointed to the mission simply in order to air their own views, but to represent what is undoubtedly a wide cross-section of opinion in the Commonwealth itself.

It became desirable to set out what ultimate objectives are during their consultations with the parties principally concerned. You will notice that paragraph (A) is the suspension of air attacks on North Vietnam. This is accompanied by (B) and these are regarded as completely hanging together, a North Vietnamese undertaking to prevent the movement of any military forces.

I make no secret of my view that in the second paragraph we should have said "a suspension by North Vietnam" to balance the suspension in the first paragraph, but the general view was that the United States was not likely to suspend attacking the lines of communication and supply of the enemy merely on an undertaking. The undertaking would have to be effective before any result appeared under (A) - I dare say that is right.

Total cease fire on all sides, I might say, includes a cease fire by the Viet Cong; whether the parties involved will include the Viet Cong is not a matter for me, but for the mission.

They will go around and see if they can establish a basis for a conference. I don't quite know how you establish the basis for a conference with people who live in ambush and who come out of ambush and who presently have a nice healthy cover from cloud and rain. This is a physical problem, but following the usual communist technique, they have a political aspect and call themselves the National Liberation Front and these are designed for political purposes.

It may be that if the mission ever reaches Hanoi, Hanoi may say "We want to have some representative of the Viet Cong." That would be entirely intelligible, since the Viet Cong are obviously working under their direction. There is no reason at all why they shouldn't send for one or two of them, but the mission will determine that.

The difficulties of the mission are very great, but at the same time I think there was merit in the Commonwealth as such taking the initiative to indicate that whatever our views are, if a genuine conference could occur and be brought to accept genuine propositions which involved the freedom of South Vietnam, then the experiment was worth making.

Q. You told us Mr. Wilson talked at length with you before putting up the proposal for a mission. Could you tell us what influence on his thinking that talk might have had?

PM. I haven't a clue.

Q. Has the Australian Government had any indication of the Viet Cong's willingness or otherwise to talk with the mission?

PM. No. We have no means of communicating with them.

Q. I asked because there was a new Chinese agency report this morning that they would not meet the mission, but this did not come directly from them. It came from China.

PM. Yes, that would not surprise me. Let's be sensible about this matter. As long as North Vietnam and the Viet Cong think they are on a good wicket and are making headway, they won't talk. When they come to the conclusion they are not winning, that will be a different matter and that is why the United States and the rest of us who are involved have to keep banging away at it.

Q. Some days ago when someone asked you about the future of the Commonwealth you said you were "unclear". Do you feel any more inclined to be clearer after the last week?

PM. No. I have no views to offer on that at all.

Q. Do you regard the declaration on Malaysia this year as being stronger or more valuable than last year?

PM. No. I think that approximately it has the same effect. The main thing was to get a recognition of Malaysia's place and Malaysia's right to preserve her integrity and to ask her friends for support which, of course, is the precise principle that any of the African countries would apply in their own case.

Q. Might it not be slightly stronger because it refers to the country's integrity and gives support to the country, whereas last year they gave support only to the Prime Minister?

P.M. I see the point you make. Yes, from that point of view it might be regarded as more comprehensive. Yes, thank you very much.

Q. In his second statement on the peace mission, Nkrumah said the mission had been placed in the absurd position of having to discuss with one of those who authorised the mission the terms upon which Australia itself was prepared to disengage itself. Do you accept the premise here that we are engaged in the struggle and therefore we ought to be one of the countries with whom the mission should confer?

P.M. Oh no. That is quite unreal. True we have a force there and in that sense we are engaged in the struggle and we strongly support the American action, but the mission doesn't need to come and talk to us. Its main problem is to get in touch with those whom I may call "the other side".

Q. Do you want to comment on his proposition that the National Liberation Front and the Saigon authorities are rival governments engaged in a civil war?

P.M. I think that is the communist line and I'm sorry that he has succumbed to it, if he has. Civil war, really. Here is a settlement made and there is a line of demarcation. There is a guarantee of no fighting across the frontier, no attack on South Vietnam, but yet you have all these attacks plainly organised by the Viet Cong, obviously organised from the north. In fact they hardly make any secret of it and their supplies all come from the north. They don't produce any munitions themselves, except for a few homemade things. They all come from the north, so the north is intervening in breach of the treaty on a large scale and to convert that into a civil war when it is really a war by the north against the south is just playing with words. We don't accept that proposition any more than we would have accepted the proposition with Malaya a few years ago, when the communist bandits up in the north were engaged in a civil war. At that time nobody thought of it, but now it's the line.

Q. Do you think the Peking Government is making headway with some countries of the Commonwealth?

P.M. Yes, I do. I think that the influence..... Let's put it this way. I found this year perceptible signs of penetration by China in at least an ideological way. I think they have a real influence and perhaps a growing influence in some African countries. I won't particularise who they are.

Q. Were you heartened by the fact that the Commonwealth nations appear to have rather snubbed China over the Algiers Conference?

P.M. Oh, don't ask me what their reasons are. I know nothing about the Afro-Asian conference, but after all, when the erstwhile revolutionary head of the Algerian Government is plucked out of his place and, I gather, put on trial and another goes in, I think if I had been one of the Afro-Asian countries, I would have said we had better determine how this thing settles down otherwise we might be holding a conference in the middle of a counter-revolution.

- Q. Would you regard the communique as a victory for the moderate elements in the conference?
- P.M. I won't adopt those words, but I'll say I think the ultimate communique was a good deal better than at one stage I feared it might be.
- Q. There is one-line reference to some discussion of Chinese membership of the United Nations. Could you tell us something about that?
- P.M. You hardly need to be told that some of us don't recognise Communist China and are not to be told at a country Commonwealth meeting that we should. What any Commonwealth does in its diplomatic recognition of another nation is its business and nobody else's. There have always been a number who either have recognised Communist China or want to persuade other people to do so, but if it had a one-line reference, it had a one-minute discussion. There is a reference to the importance of China being a party to any genuine disarmament scheme, but I've said that myself, more than once. That's a practical problem.
- Q. Given the fact that most of the current disarmament negotiations of any value take place in the framework of United Nations, doesn't it make some sense that China might be brought in.....
- P.M. Now you want to argue with me. The Australian Government's view on the recognition of Communist China....
- Q. Not the recognition of Communist China, but its place vis-a-vis the United Nations.
- P.M. Well, one seems to be almost consequential on the other, if you recognise them. You first of all have to solve the problem of Formosa and this is a problem which is neatly dodged by almost everybody who discusses this matter, but I don't want to make a long statement on that. We have stated our views and our reasons many times in Parliament.
- Q. Can you see an alternative way in which China could be brought into disarmament talks of some kinds outside the United Nations?
- P.M. Well, after all, China has been involved in some discussions in relation to South-East Asia - I don't think it is at all impossible on an overwhelming matter of world significance like disarmament to have people coming to conference whether they are members of the United Nations or not, simply in their capacity as significant powers.
- Q. One last question on a subject which has become rather touchy. Could you tell us whether you have discussed the Governor-Generalship with The Queen since you have been here?
- P.M. Why has it become rather touchy? Only because some fellow in the "Sunday Mirror" has to write a think-piece about somebody. You know, it is most awful nonsense. There is a limit to folly on these matters. When a Governor-General is appointed, The Queen will announce it.

Q. But have you discussed it yet with The Queen?

P.M. I have had a preliminary talk with her. All these names that have been bandied around, they dwell in beauty as in the eye of the beholder.

Q. Could you go further Sir?

P.M. No. I have a strict sense of courtesy in my dealings with The Queen.
